

Joint Chiefs Link Tepid SALT II Support To Call for Increased Military Spending

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON—The Joint Chiefs of Staff linked a tepid endorsement of the new Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty with a strong plea for stepped-up spending on military programs.

Flanked by the chiefs of the four military services, Gen. David Jones, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "we consider it absolutely essential that, if the nation accepts the SALT II agreement, it does so with a full understanding that we will be required to undertake a series of important strategic modernization programs in order to maintain strategic parity" with the Soviet Union.

The Chiefs' first public comment on SALT II was the most forceful statement yet of what's emerging as a central theme of the government's effort to win ratification of the treaty—the need to build new weapons despite the limits in the agreement with the Soviets.

License to Spend

This seeming paradox has disturbed liberals, such as Sen. George McGovern (D., S.D.) and conservatives, such as Sen. Jesse Helms (R., N.C.), who charged that the treaty is a license to increase arms spending.

Gen. Jones said the need for new strategic weapons arises from the fact that "the Soviets have been out-investing us for 10 years," with a three-to-one edge on spending for strategic weapons. As a result, he said, "We are unanimous in our view that Soviet momentum has brought them from a position of clear inferiority to their current status of at least military equality with the U.S."

A Soviet strategic edge probably wouldn't significantly increase the prospect of a Russian nuclear attack against the U.S., but it could encourage "more adventurous behavior in areas where our interests clash," Gen. Jones said.

Earlier in the day, Defense Secretary Harold Brown said that the U.S. hasn't "done enough" to improve strategic forces over the last decade, but he noted that the administration is moving ahead with the MX intercontinental ballistic missile; highly accurate cruise missiles for the bomber force and the new Trident missile-carrying submarine.

"With the programs the administration proposes, we will retain an adequate strategic balance through 1985," when the treaty expires, "and improve the relative balance thereafter, though the balance will be less

favorable in the early 1980s than it is currently," Mr. Brown said. "The SALT II agreement will produce a more favorable balance for the U.S. during its duration than we would have without it."

"Modest but Useful"

Gen. Jones called the agreement a "modest but useful step" in maintaining national security as long as the U.S. undertakes new programs. In this case, he said, the treaty "is in U.S. national interests and merits your support," although he stressed that the Chiefs do have reservations.

In particular, he said the military leaders object to provisions that allow the Soviets to retain 308 large SS-18 ballistic missiles and to exclude their Backfire bomber from the treaty limits. He also said that U.S. intelligence services will face "a stern challenge" in their efforts to verify Soviet compliance, but that they should be able to.

Despite their doubts, the Chiefs' unanimous endorsement of the treaty—each member voiced his support of the chairman's statement—and particularly their assertion that it should be possible to verify Soviet compliance will boost the treaty's chances of receiving the 67 votes needed for ratification.